

Less
content
is more
effective

Introduction

In the ever-changing digital landscape, it's more important than ever to communicate effectively.

The way we design and present information plays a pivotal role in how well messages resonate with audiences. This case study highlights how Essex County Council has embraced the "Less is More" approach to design, focusing on clarity, simplicity, and effective messaging.

By eliminating unnecessary elements and homing in on core messages, ECC has enhanced communication and maximised the impact of their materials.

Why "Less is More" Works

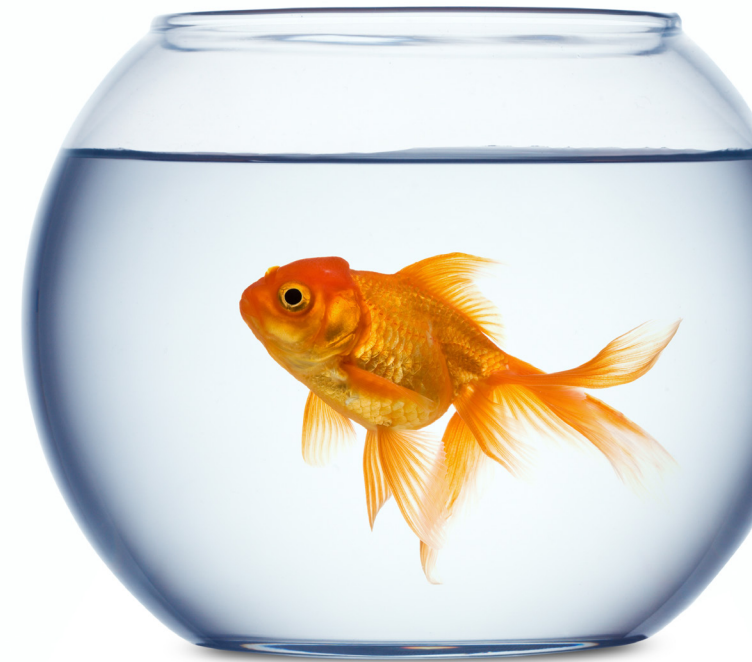
In today's world, we are constantly bombarded with information. From constant notifications to endless scrolling, attention spans are shorter than ever, and cognitive overload has become a common challenge.

Cognitive overload occurs when the brain receives more information than it can process at once, leading to confusion, frustration, and difficulty in making decisions. In the context of design, this means that cluttered layouts and too much text can confuse the audience, detracting from the core message.

By focusing on the essential elements and eliminating the noise, ECC has streamlined their messaging to ensure clarity and impact. Simple designs not only grab attention but also guide viewers directly to what matters most.

The average adult internet user's attention span is

8.25
seconds



The Power of Simplicity in Banner Stands

Banner stands are a prime example of how less can be more. A common misconception is that because banner stands are large, they should contain a lot of information. However, the opposite is true. Banner stands are meant to catch the eye and encourage people to engage with your message, not overwhelm them with details.

Key Considerations for Effective Banner Stands:

- **Clear Branding:** Less content means there is space for brand visuals and graphics, to catch the eye and build recognition. Keep all supporting materials on-brand to maintain cohesion.
- **Colour:** Simple designs allow for bold use of brand colours, ensuring they are eye-catching yet not overwhelming.
- **Text:** Less text means large fonts can be used, that are easy to understand from a distance. Legibility is key.
- **Images:** Large format designs require high-resolution images (300 dpi). One or two impactful images are stronger than lots of small ones.



The Same Principles Apply to Posters and Flyers

For other materials like posters and flyers, the same principles apply:

- concise messaging
- a clear visual hierarchy, and
- a focus on key information.

- **Information Hierarchy:** Present the essential message upfront. In a few seconds, convey **Who** you are, **What** you do, and **What** you want the audience to do next.
- **Essential Information Only:** Focus on a punchy headline, a short explanation, and use bullet points or icons to make the content digestible. End with a clear call to action.
- **Use of Space:** The top half of the banner should contain the core message, while the bottom third can focus on decorative graphic elements, which may be partially obscured by a table.

Maximising Impact in Multi-Page Documents

While banner stands and flyers require brevity, some communications demand more in-depth exploration, such as reports or strategy documents. However, even for long-form materials like annual reports or reviews, the same “less is more” approach applies.

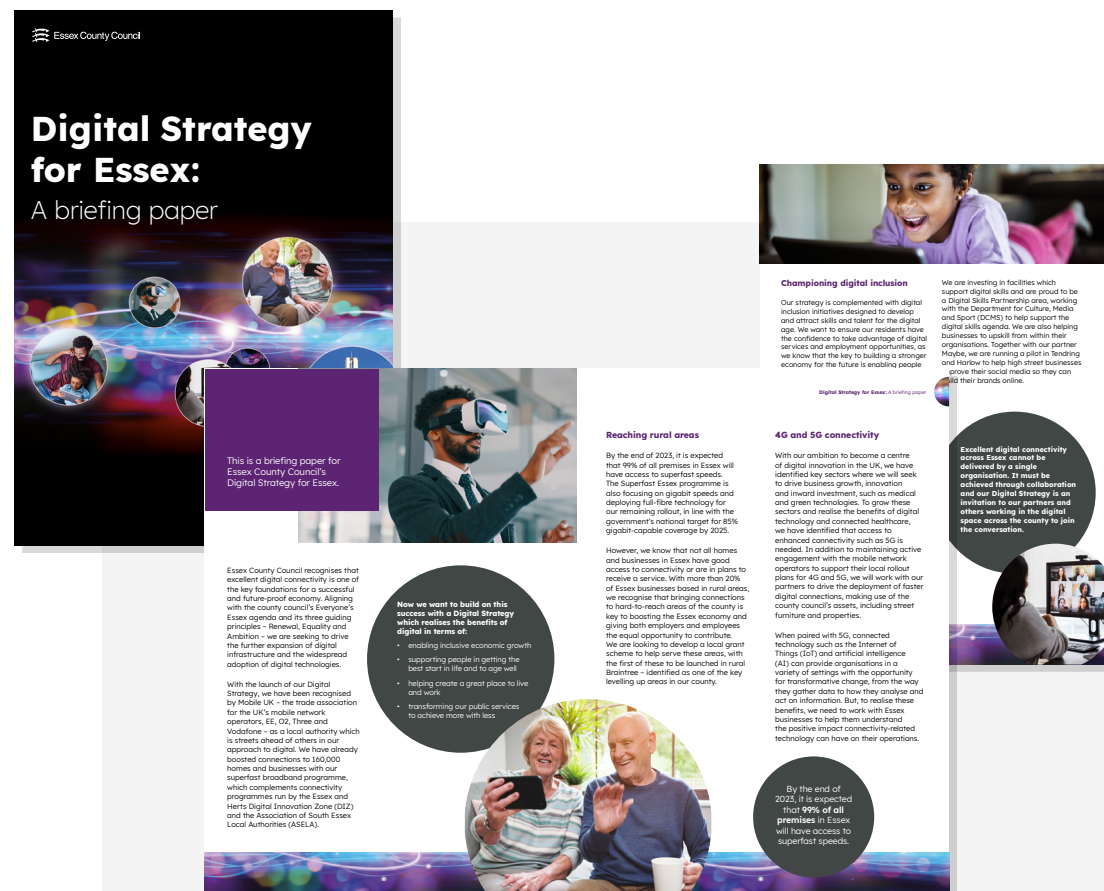
Key Questions to Ask:

- **Does it need to be a multipage report?**
Evaluate whether you can communicate the same message differently.
- **What's the goal?**
Understand what the information needs to achieve and what the user should take away from it.
- **How can the content be made more digestible?**
Focus on how to present information concisely and in meaningful chunks. A report is often not the answer.

Audience?
Purpose?

If a report has to be created, consider a short summary alongside the full, detailed document. This allows readers to access key insights without wading through excessive details. A full report might be published online, but it's the shorter, more visual summary that gets the most engagement.

Additionally, by pulling out highlights such as key quotes, figures, or facts, ECC can create content that is reusable across platforms. This not only maximises the impact of each piece of content but also ensures greater engagement, as smaller, more digestible pieces are easier for audiences to absorb.



Campaign Messaging: The AIDA Funnel

Campaigns benefit from focusing on short, engaging, and adaptable messaging. The classic AIDA model (Awareness, Interest, Desire, Action) offers a framework for crafting content that resonates across different stages of the customer journey.

1. Awareness (Grab Attention)



Goal: Make the audience aware of your service or initiative.

How: Use eye-catching visuals, punchy headlines, and content that resonates with your target audience.

2. Interest (Build Curiosity)



Goal: Spark curiosity and keep the audience wanting to know more.

How: Provide valuable insights, showcase benefits, and educate your audience.

3. Desire (Create Emotional Connection)



Goal: Generate a desire for your service by showing its impact.

How: Use case studies, testimonials, or emotional storytelling to make the audience feel connected to the cause.

4. Action (Drive Conversion)



Goal: Motivate the audience to take action.

How: Include strong calls to action and ensure there are no barriers to completing the action, such as overly complicated website navigation or long forms.

The Impact of Simplified Content

A recent study from ECC, based on the engagement of their multi-channel campaign “Everyone’s Essex,” demonstrates the impact of simplified content. Here’s a breakdown of the engagement:

Video

3,180 views

HTML document

3.2k views

PDF

255 downloads

PDF documents, were the least accessed and least engaged with. This highlights how more interactive and visually dynamic formats, such as videos and HTML content, can draw in more viewers, proving that in today’s fast-paced world, simplicity and clarity are crucial to capturing attention.

Conclusion

By embracing the “Less is More” philosophy, Essex County Council has created more effective communications. **Through simplifying content, focusing on essential messages, and utilising design to guide the viewer’s attention, ECC ensures their communication is both impactful and engaging.** As the digital landscape continues to evolve, staying concise, clear, and to the point will be key to ensuring your message cuts through the noise and resonates with your audience.

